

Why We Oppose Religious Legislation

ESR

Ellet Joseph Waggoner

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
-------------------	---

This is a subject that should be clearly defined in the mind of every individual, especially of those who act as teachers either in public or private, or who have the power to influence public opinion to any degree whatever. Those who favor religious legislation very naturally imagine that opposition to their movement is actuated by selfish motives. They think that our only reason for opposing it is the fear that it will tend to inconvenience or endanger us. We say it is very natural that they, should imagine that opposition to their movement is wholly selfish, because religious legislation is actuated by nothing; but the most selfish motives; and those who advocate it cannot grasp the idea that there can be any action that is not selfish. To anticipate direct argument, we might call attention to the fact that their suspicion of our motives gives evidence of their real ideas of the natural results of the success of their movement. If they did not know that their movement cannot fail to result in persecution, they would not think that our sole reason for opposing it is the danger of being persecuted. But this, we may say, scarcely enters into the account at all. Our reasons for opposing religious legislation are not personal, but general, and of such a nature that we think all candid persons can appreciate them when fairly presented.*WWORL 3.1*

The first reason that we present—not the strongest, yet in itself amply sufficient, and one that will appeal most strongly to the largest number of people—is that religious legislation tends directly to the overthrow of civil liberty; it is based on the principle that minorities have no rights that majorities are bound to respect. As the matter of religious legislation is a live issue at the present time, we will take for our proofs and illustrations items from the working of the movement in this country.*WWORL 4.1*

And first it will be necessary to show that religious legislation is sought for at the present time. This we can do by the statements of those who are working for a national Sunday law. In his plea before the Knights of Labor, for help in securing a Sunday law, the field secretary of the American Sabbath Union said:—*WWORL 4.2*

“A weekly day of rest has never been permanently secured in any land except on the basis of religious obligation. Take the religion out, and you take the rest out.”*WWORL 4.3*

Rev. J. H. Knowles, editor of the *Pearl of Days*, said in an editorial of January 25, 1889:—*WWORL 4.4*

“It will become more and more apparent that the real defenders of the day are among those who regard it a divine, not merely a human institution.”*WWORL 4.5*

Col. Elliott F. Shepard, in accepting the presidency of the American Sabbath Union, said:—*WWORL 4.6*

“The work, therefore, of this society is only just begun. We do not put this work on mere human reasoning; for all that can be overthrown by human reason. We rest it directly and only on the divine commandment.”—*Pearl of Days, January 25, 1889. WWORL 4.7*

Article 3 of the constitution of the American Sabbath Union reads thus:—*WWORL 5.1*

“The object of this union is to preserve the Christian Sabbath as a day of rest and worship.”*WWORL 5.2*

And finally, the Blair Sunday-Rest bill, which was so heartily indorsed by this union and by the National Reform Association, expressly declared that it should be construed—*WWORL 5.3*

“To secure to the whole people rest from toil during the first day of the week, their mental and moral culture, and the religious observance of the Sabbath-day.”*WWORL 5.4*

This evidence might be multiplied, but it is sufficient to show that Sunday legislation is religious legislation, and nothing else. Now let us examine its nature and results.*WWORL 5.5*

In Prof. Herrick Johnson’s address before the American Sabbath Union, on the Sunday newspaper, an address which the union circulated broadcast over the country as an official document, there are four propositions laid down, the fourth one of which, taken from an Illinois Supreme Court report, is as follows:—*WWORL 5.6*

“Every individual has the right to the enjoyment of the Christian

Sabbath without liability to annoyance from the ordinary secular pursuits of life, except so far as they may be dictated by necessity or charity.”*WWORL 5.7*

This proposition is a sound one. We have no fault to find with it in itself, but only with the way it is applied; for the Sunday-law advocates’ idea of giving people a *right* to rest on Sunday is to compel everybody to rest. The proposition that every individual has the right to the enjoyment of a rest on Sunday is no more self-evident than that every individual has the right not to rest on that day, but to rest on some other day. Both these propositions being true, it is very clearly seen that ample provision is already made against anybody being unnecessarily disturbed on his chosen day of rest. We concede that everybody who wishes to rest upon Sunday has the right, and should be protected in the right, to do so undisturbed. But the very essence of Sunday legislation, and the only foundation upon which it rests, is the theory that those who choose to rest on any other day than Sunday have no right to the enjoyment of that rest undisturbed, and have no right to refrain from resting on Sunday.*WWORL 5.8*

That this is what is implied by the proposition for our proofs laid down by Mr. Johnson, and indorsed by the American Sabbath Union, is clearly shown by their official statements. Thus Dr. Edwards, in to an address before the National Reform Convention held in New York in 1873, having stated that the National Reform movement is opposed to atheism in the government, gave his idea of atheism as follows. Said he:—*WWORL 6.1*

“The atheist is the man who denies the being of a God and a future life. To him, mind and matter are the same, and time is the be-all and the end-all of consciousness and of character.”*WWORL 6.2*

“The deist admits God, but denies that he has any such personal control over human affairs as we call providence, or that he ever manifests himself and his will in a revelation.”*WWORL 6.3*

“The Jews admit God, providence, and revelation, but reject the entire scheme of gospel redemption by Jesus Christ, as sheer imagination, or, worse, sheer imposture.”*WWORL 6.4*

“The Seventh-day Baptists believe in God and Christianity, and are conjoined with the other members of this class by the accident of differing with the mass of Christians upon the question of what precise day of the week shall be observed as holy.”*WWORL 7.1*

“These are all for the occasion, and so far as our amendment is concerned, one class.”*WWORL 7.2*

Here we find that when the National Reform movement shall have succeeded, the individual who does not regard Sunday will be counted as an atheist. Now listen to what Dr. Edwards said of atheists, in the same address:—*WWORL 7.3*

“What are the rights of the atheist? I would tolerate him as I would tolerate a poor lunatic, for in my view his mind is scarcely sound. So long as he does not rave, so long as he is not dangerous, I would tolerate him. I would tolerate him as I would a conspirator.”*WWORL 7.4*

This is simply saying that under the National Reform *regime*, the man who should dare to observe another day than Sunday would be considered as having no rights whatever, and entitled to no respect. If he should dare to publicly declare his belief, his insanity would be considered dangerous, and he would be shut up.”*WWORL 7.5*

This has been stated even more plainly in an article in the *Christian Statesman*, July 7, 1887, entitled, “The Bible in the Public Schools,” which was editorially commended as “a masterly article.” The writer said:—*WWORL 7.6*

“Some advanced champions for freedom of conscience and the rights of men, in Britain and the United States, cannot be accommodated. In this category must be classed agnostics, atheists, and scientific infidels. For my part, without hesitation or apology, I deny such men any reasonable claim to conscientious convictions and privileges at all.”*WWORL 7.7*

Now substitute in the above Mr. Edwards’ definition of an atheist, and you have the simple statement that under National Reform government, people who do not observe Sunday—no matter how

strictly they may observe another day of the week-will not be considered as having any claim to conscientious convictions and privileges-they will not be considered as having any rights whatever.*WWORL 8.1*

Now listen to another statement. It is from the *Christian Nation*, of September 15, 1886. This is one of the official organs of the National Reform Association, and therefore may be depended upon as properly representing National Reform. I read:—*WWORL 8.2*

“Neither does National Reform propose to deprive any citizens, without forfeiture, of any just and inalienable civil right.”*WWORL 8.3*

But we have already shown from high authority that National Reformers consider that atheists-among whom are classed all who differ with them in religious faith, and especially those who differ with them in respect to the precise day of the week which should be observed-have no rights whatever; so that all a man will have to do to forfeit his rights in their estimation will be to disregard Sunday, or to religiously observe another day in its stead. Now mark, according to the statement that I have just read, National Reformers deliberately propose to deprive such citizens of just and inalienable rights.*WWORL 8.4*

And this is just what the advocates of religious legislation will do. The success of their movement cannot fail of resulting in religious persecution. With the above deliberately expressed intention to deprive men of just and inalienable rights, place another equally base avowal by Rev. Dr. A. D. Mayo, at the Cincinnati National Reform Convention, in 1872. After declaring that the people of the United States would acknowledge God in the Constitution, he said:—*WWORL 8.5*

“They will protect the rights of every citizen, and persecute no man for his religion until that religion leads him to disobey the law which expresses the will of the majority concerning the moral duty of the citizen.”*WWORL 9.1*

Of course they will persecute. If they succeed in getting the laws that are desired, they cannot do otherwise. For the State is bound to enforce all the laws on its statute-books. If it has laws concerning

religion and religious practices, it must enforce them, or else have its authority despised. But the punishment of a man because he differs with others in matters of religious faith and practice, is simply religious persecution. *WWORL 9.2*

Mr. Blair declared ("Senate Hearing," p. 97) that the only object of the proposed national Sunday law is to make efficient the existing Sunday laws of the States. Yet inefficient as he considers them, they have proved efficient enough in Georgia, Tennessee, and Arkansas to deprive men of property, of liberty, and, indirectly, even of life. Now listen to what Rev. J. M. Foster, district secretary of the National Reform Association, said when pressed to give his opinion of these outrages:—*WWORL 9.3*

"As to the alleged cases of persecution in three States, I have read the description of the cases in Arkansas, and they are not of the public-spirited class that is willing to suffer for the common good. The old man and his son of seventeen, whose horse was sold for \$27, and the man whose young wife and child died while he was in prison, brought that evil on themselves by breaking the law."—*Christian Statesman, Oct. 10, 1889. WWORL 9.4*

It is not too much to say that such talk is fiendish. Let no man say that persecution will not follow the passage of religious laws. It cannot be otherwise. And it will not be the vicious and depraved who will be the most active in the persecution. No; it will be the very men who are considered the guardians of public morals. Men who are personally very pleasant and amiable may make the worst sort of persecutors; when they get so blind that they can regard as a common criminal the one who disregards an unjust human law in order that he may obey a just and divine commandment. One of the strongest indictments against religious legislation is that its tendency is to transform naturally amiable men into cold-blooded demons of cruelty. *WWORL 9.5*

Human rights are God-given; and since God is no respecter of persons, it follows that he has given to all men the same rights; and thus the Declaration of Independence simply formulated a Heaven-born truth when it declared that all men are created equal, and are endowed by their Creator with the inalienable right to life, liberty,

and the pursuit of happiness. That is, all men are created equal with respect to the rights with which they are endowed. Every man has a God-given right to find his pleasure, enjoy liberty, and pursue happiness in his own way. Of course it is understood that no one shall interfere with another; for all are to be equally protected; and if all are equally protected, none will be interfered with. Now it needs no argument to show that one man's violation of Sunday does not deprive another man of his privilege to rest. That ten men in any community who do not observe Sunday, do not in the slightest degree interfere with the right and liberty of the thousands of others to observe that day, is clearly shown by the fact that in scores of instances a single individual observes the seventh day regularly and strictly, and is not hampered in that observance in the least by the fact that thousands of others openly disregard it, and have no respect for his observance of it. *WWORL 10.1*

The proposition that every individual has the right to the enjoyment of Sunday, rightly interpreted, is only the inverse of the proposition that every individual has the right to the observance of Saturday, or of any other day, or, so far as man is concerned, of no day at all. But Sunday laws, as before stated, make no provision for the rights of any except those who observe Sunday, and deliberately propose to deprive all others of their God-given rights. As the *Christian Nation* says; they propose to deprive certain individuals of inalienable rights and privileges. Thus by their own mouth it is proved that religious legislation, as embodied in the movement of the National Reform Association and the American Sabbath Union, is a direct blow at the foundation of our government, and is directly in opposition to the Declaration of Independence,—the charter of American liberty. It is un-American, and that alone should be sufficient to condemn it. The man who in a public assembly would declare that the framers and signers of the Declaration of Independence were misguided men, and that their work was a fraud, would be set down as the worst kind of an anarchist. The preacher who should make such a statement would lose his congregation. The teacher who would make such a declaration to a class would be expelled from the public schools. Yet the National Reform Association and the American Sabbath Union make the same declaration no less boldly, although not in express terms. They have boldly and openly railed against the statement of the

Declaration of Independence that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.*WWORL 11.1*

We say, then, that their movement ought to be opposed, because it is of the very essence of anarchy. It does not help the matter to say that those whose rights are thus disregarded are only a few, although Sunday-law advocates think to console themselves with this idea. Thus Dr. Edwards said:—*WWORL 12.1*

“The parties whose conscience we are charged with troubling, taken altogether, are but few in number. This determines nothing as to who is right; but the fact remains, and it worthy of note, that, taken all together, they amount to but a small fraction of our citizenship.”*WWORL 12.2*

Almost every lecturer in behalf of Sunday legislation lays great stress upon the assertion that the observers of the seventh day “amount to but about seven-tenths of one per cent of the entire population;” and that, therefore, they are too insignificant to be noticed or to have their rights and privileges taken into account.*WWORL 12.3*

But right here is a principle which they overlook: It is not whether a few individuals who observe the seventh day may be ignored on that account, but whether the government can afford to disregard the rights of people simply because they are in the minority. Let the government once start upon the line of doing injustice to even a single individual, and there is no telling where it will stop. If a law may be enacted which will trample upon the rights of one individual, the same principle will allow the enactment of a law that will ignore the rights of many. If a few people may have their rights ignored because they differ with the majority as to the precise day of the week to be observed religiously, a few other people may have their rights ignored because they differ with the majority on some other subject. Moreover, majorities and minorities are subject to fluctuation. Politics are changeable, and the side which has the majority to-day may, within a year, be represented only by a feeble minority; so that if the government once starts upon a career of injustice, not a single individual will have any guarantee of safety.*WWORL 12.4*

We have been proceeding upon the supposition that those who observe Sunday, and those who are working for national Sunday laws, are in the majority; but this is a great mistake. The population of the United States is between 60,000,000 and 70,000,000; of this number the best statistics-those which are furnished by the religious denominations themselves-show that, less than 15,000,000 are even professors of religion. Only that number of people have their names on church-books. According to the admission of leading men in this Sunday-law movement, a large per cent of this number pay no more regard to Sunday than do non-professors. Therefore, it is self-evident that the attempt to secure Sunday laws, and to have the government enforce them, is an attempt by a very small minority to control the country.*WWORL 13.1*

The petition that has been presented to Congress had, according to the highest estimate-of its friends, only 14,000,000 indorsers; and of this number the larger portion never saw the petition. The Methodist Episcopal Church, the Baptist Church, the Presbyterian Church North and South; and the Reformed Church, are counted as having indorsed the petition; and yet it was only a few delegates from these bodies that indorsed it; and on the strength of this so-called indorsement, the entire membership was counted, to make 6,000,000 of the 14,000,000. Leave out the vast number who had never seen the petition, and that 6,000,000 would dwindle down to a small fraction of 1,000,000. Then, notwithstanding the fact that the Presbyterian Church was counted with the other denominations-which together only made up 6,000,000 of the 14,000,000-that church appears the second time in the same list of 14,000,000, thus furnishing 700,000 more to the list, all of which should be omitted.*WWORL 13.2*

Then, again, a letter from Cardinal Gibbons personally indorsing the movement, was counted as adding 7,000,000 to the list, all of which should be deducted.*WWORL 14.1*

Then the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 200,000 strong, was added, to help swell the 14,000,000 list. But the very name of the association shows that all of its members are also members of the various Christian churches; and, therefore, they were counted in the denominations that are represented by wholesale.*WWORL 14.2*

Then, again, the Knights of Labor were counted over 200,000 strong, to help swell the list. But, in the first place, many of these are members of churches, and so had already appeared in the count of those churches; in the second place, of the 219,000 Knights, probably not more than 200 were present in the assembly which passed a vote favoring the petition. And, lastly, the fraud that was perpetrated in counting the entire body of the Knights of Labor as favoring the Sunday-law petition, is shown by a recent dispatch from Milwaukee to the *Chicago Tribune*. It stated that the Sunday-closing question was likely to cause a great deal of trouble to politicians in Wisconsin. It mentioned the effort that was being made by some of the churches to secure Sunday legislation, and closed thus:—*WWORL 14.3*

“The proposition to hold a State mass convention for the purpose of organizing all over the State, has met with a great deal of favor, and will probably be put in effect sometime during the winter: The workers are also trying to interest the Knights of Labor in the movement.”*WWORL 14.4*

This would sound very strange in the face of the fact that it has been certified to Congress that the Knights of Labor, 219,000 strong; have already indorsed the movement, did we not already know that that representation was a base fraud.*WWORL 15.1*

By this brief analysis of the pretended 14,000,000 signature petition, we have shown that an exceedingly small per cent of the population of the United States is working for Sunday laws; but there is another point which will very largely cut; down even this small minority. The petition certifies that each one of its indorsers is an adult resident of the United States, twenty-one years of age, or more; yet the entire membership of all the churches was counted, although it is well known that every large denomination has a large percentage of members who are less than twenty-one years of age. That this fraudulent representation was deliberately planned is shown by the confession of the leading worker, the field secretary of the American Sabbath Union. In attempting to defend himself and his co-workers from the charge of deliberate fraud in the matter, he made the following statement under oath:—*WWORL 15.2*

“It is implied that some fraud was perpetrated because the whole membership of churches petitioning was given, not those above twenty-one only; but the records quoted show that there was no attempt to deceive. It is impossible to tell how many in a denomination are under twenty-one, and so the whole number is given.”*WWORL 15.3*

Who cares how many in a denomination are under twenty-one years of age? What has that to do with the securing of a Sunday law? The petition has nothing to do with the number in any denomination who are under twenty-one years of age, or who are over twenty-one years of age. All it has to do is with the individuals who voluntarily sign it. If those who formed and circulated the petition had been honest in their intention, the question of how many in any denomination were or were not under twenty-one years of age, would not have troubled them at all.*WWORL 15.4*

But they were determined to swell their list of petitioners by every means possible. They could have *guessed* the number of church members who were above twenty-one years of age, and put that number down, and thus have presented a little more nearly the appearance of honest dealing; but they resolved to run no risk of making a mistake in number, and so put down the whole number, thus deliberately perpetrating a base fraud. It may well be said that no attempt was made to deceive, because the fraud is so transparent that no one in his senses could be deceived; but the imposition was none the less on that account.*WWORL 16.1*

If anyone asks what this has to do with the reasons why we oppose religious legislation, we reply that it has a great deal to do with it. Truth is never advanced by fraud; it cannot be. Truth never seeks to gain its ends by trickery, for that would defeat them. Truth has a natural and irreconcilable repugnance for error and falsehood, but wickedness can be fostered only by deceit. Therefore when any movement seeks to advance itself by any fraudulent means, there can be no better evidence that it is a wicked affair. In every age, from the time of Constantine until now, religious legislation by civil power has been built up by fraud, vindictive selfishness, and perjury.*WWORL 16.2*

From what has already been given, therefore, it is plainly evident that the movement in this country for a national Sunday law is a movement for religious legislation, and that this movement is a most wickedly selfish attempt on the part of a few people to get, control of the government; a deliberate design to overturn the just and inalienable rights of the majority who either conscientiously differ with them, or else are indifferent; and a settled determination to persecute even to death those who do not tamely yield to their usurpation of authority. It is the worst phase of anarchy that has ever appeared in this country, and should be opposed by every true American citizen.*WWORL 17.1*

Another, and the chief reason why we oppose religious legislation, is that, no matter how sincere and conscientious its advocates may be, its influence can be only to bar the progress of true religion, and to propagate immorality. The proof of this is ample. We will begin with the argument for the suppression of Sunday newspapers. The *National Presbyterian*, of January, 1889, in an editorial on "The Church and the Sunday Newspaper," said:—*WWORL 17.2*

"The responsibility of the church for the continued existence of the Sunday newspaper is beginning to attract the attention of thoughtful men. It is a fact which it is idle to attempt to conceal, that it is sustained by the patronage of the members of the evangelical churches. It is the support given them by this class, and this alone, that makes it practicable to continue the publication of these papers. The responsibility, then, of this great and growing evil is with the church."*WWORL 17.3*

The *Chicago Advance* of January 24, 1889, contained an article by Rev. Geo. C. Noyes, D.D., entitled, "The Sunday Newspaper,—an Expostulation," in which it was stated:—*WWORL 17.4*

"If all the Christian people in the land who read or advertise in the Sunday papers were to withdraw their patronage, the publication of every one of them would cease within a month. Upon Christian people rests the responsibility of their continued publication."*WWORL 18.1*

The Rev. Herrick Johnson, in his published speech upon the Sunday newspaper, brings this indictment against it:—*WWORL*

18.2

“It is tempting hundreds and thousands to stay away from the sanctuary, and making it manifold harder for the truth to reach those who go. Ruskin says, in view of the thronging activities of our times, the rush and roar of our busy life, the push and press and ambitions of trade, a minister on Sunday morning has just ‘thirty minutes to raise the dead in.’ The Sunday newspaper is another large stone laid on that sepulcher, making it just so much harder to raise the dead.”*WWORL 18.3*

Again he says:—*WWORL 18.4*

“This is the fearful indictment against it, that it is keeping an army of workmen from the day of rest they ought to have. It is educating an army of newsboys to trample on the Sabbath, and so counteracting the best influences that Christian people are making to throw around them.... It is honeycombing society with false notions about the Sabbath; and it is deadening the spiritual sensibilities even of many of the people of God.”*WWORL 18.5*

Now, here is an acknowledged evil in the church; professed Christian people are having their spiritual sensibilities deadened, and are openly violating their church obligations; and what is the remedy proposed? Is it a revival of religion? or increased zeal on the part of the ministry? Oh; no; it is to have the State suppress the thing which is leading them astray. What is the plan proposed to enable the minister to reach the people? Is it to ask the aid of the Holy Spirit?—Not at all; it is only to ask the aid of the State to suppress the Sunday newspaper. Thus the effect of religious legislation is to substitute the power of the State for the power of the Spirit of God. It surely can need no argument to show that the religion thus fostered will be only a hollow shell. It will be State religion, and not the religion of the Spirit of God.*WWORL 18.6*

The State may force people to church, and may enforce a form of religion, but the Spirit of God alone can reach the heart; and without this power an enforced form is worse than useless, since many people will trust in that form, and will rest content with that alone. It is a most humiliating confession of weakness and wickedness, when the church asks the aid of the State. Take the statements

cited from the *National Presbyterian* and the *Advance*. Appeals for Sunday laws, based on such statements, amount to just this: "We have so much evil in the church-so many disorderly members-that we are unable to do anything; there are not enough conscientious members to discipline the disorderly ones, and not enough of the Spirit of God in the church to convert them; and so we must have the help of the State to enforce church discipline, and establish a form of godliness." *WWORL 19.1*

They do not realize that this is simply to reject God and to trust in the power of man. Says Bishop Vincent, "The church makes a great mistake when it seeks to secure worldly position; and to influence temporal power." "The abomination of abominations is the aspiration after temporal power on the part of the church. All the church wants is spiritual power, and this goes out when temporal power is invoked." *WWORL 19.2*

Those who appeal to the State to help the church in its struggles, should learn a lesson from Ezra. When he was on his journey from Babylon to Jerusalem to build the city, he had to pass with women and children through a hostile country. He was greatly troubled; but instead of asking the king for a troop of soldiers to protect his company, he fasted and prayed to the Lord. Says he:—*WWORL 20.1*

"For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us." *Ezra 8:22, 23. WWORL 20.2*

The church has preached to the world about the power of God; yet, unlike Ezra, it is not ashamed to ask the world for help, instead of trusting in God. Thus they confess their lack of knowledge of God. Two great evils must result from this course: First, the world will no more believe that there is any such thing as the power of the Holy Spirit, and it will think itself supreme. Second, both the church and the world will be plunged more deeply into sin; because the church is appealing for help against an evil, to the very source of that evil.

The world cannot purify the world. A worldly church cannot clear itself of worldliness by the aid of the world. Therefore Christians should oppose religious legislation for the honor of God, and for the preservation of his truth.*WWORL 20.3*

But I have a still stronger indictment in this line to bring against religious legislation. It is that such legislation naturally tends to the grossest immorality, and, what is worse, leads the vicious to think that they are Christians. Ground for this charge is found in the following statements. Dr. Edwards, in his New York address before referred to, said:—*WWORL 20.4*

“And yet another objection is that the laws of Moses will have to be re-enacted and enforced among us, and that these laws are not at all fitted to our times, our freedom, our civilization. I confess that I am not at all afraid of Moses.... Now, if there be anything in the laws of Moses which the coming of Christ and the subsequent overthrow of Judaism did not abrogate, let them be pointed out—there cannot be many of them—and we are prepared to accept there and have them re-enacted.”*WWORL 21.1*

Again, in the hearing on the Sunday-Rest bill before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, Senator Blair asked the question:—*WWORL 21.2*

“Suppose that human beings trying to live in accordance with the will of God, re-enact his law, and write it in their statute-books; is it wrong for society to put into its public laws the requirements of the obedience to God and his law?”—*Hearing, p. 65. WWORL 21.3*

And when this question had been answered by the statement that the effect of Sunday legislation is to call the attention of the individual to human authority, to the exclusion of the divine, Mr. Blair replied:—*WWORL 21.4*

“The will of God exists. He requires the observance of the seventh day, just as he prohibits murder; and as we re-enact his law in making a law and re-enforcing it against murder, so all the States have en-acted laws against the desecration of the Sabbath, going further or not so far, according to the idea of various Legislatures.”—*ib. p. 66. WWORL 21.5*

Just think of it! Re-enacting the law of God! And not simply re-enacting it, but even going farther than God, according to the State Legislature! Was greater presumption ever dreamed of? What could more perfectly meet the description of the power that should oppose and exalt itself above all that is called God or that is worshiped?*WWORL 21.6*

But listen to two more statements on the same point. In the *Christian Statesman* of May 30, 1889, Mr. Crafts said:—*WWORL 22.1*

“Now the question comes right to this point: God having ordained the Sabbath, as you concede, with all religious organizations, here is the national government, which alone can make that law of God operative in this sphere of national action. Why should not the national government, then, re-enact that conceded law of the Almighty, and make it effective?”—*Hearing, p. 66.WWORL 22.2*

Here we see an utter ignoring of the power of the Spirit of God to influence men. The national government alone able to make the law of God effective!! We have already noted the blasphemous presumption of such an idea, but now after one more citation we wish to call special attention to the result upon the people. In the *Christian Nation* of December 5, 1888, the Rev. N. M., Johnston, speaking of Christ’s work on earth, said of him:—*WWORL 22.3*

“He healed disease; an intimation that when his gospel shall prevail, and wickedness be suppressed by law, then pestilence and disease shall be unknown.”*WWORL 22.4*

Now note the following points:—*WWORL 22.5*

1. The law of God is spiritual. God requires truth in the inward parts. He has declared that outward compliance with his requirements amounts to nothing unless the service is from the heart. His word declares that hatred is murder, and that a lustful desire or look is adultery. No sign may be made that man can see, but God, who looks upon the heart, sees violation of his commandments. The Pharisees, who appeared righteous outwardly unto men, but were corrupt within, were denounced in most unmeasured terms. See *Matthew 23:26-28.WWORL 23.1*

2. As wickedness has to do with the heart, so has morality; and nothing but the Spirit of God can reach the heart. No law, not excepting the law of God, can put down wickedness. The only righteousness that is worthy of the name is the righteousness of faith. The apostle Paul declared that he did not want to be found at the last day having the righteousness of the law, but only with the righteousness which is by the faith of Jesus Christ. *WWORL 23.2*

3. Since the law of God has to do with the thoughts and intents of the heart, it is evident that no human law can enforce obedience to it, nor punish for disobedience thereof. A man may be as corrupt at heart as Satan can make him, and yet if he preserves a fair exterior, men may call him good. Therefore it follows that, *WWORL 23.3*

4. When the State assumes the power of re-enacting and making effective the laws of God, it will declare men to be moral who are grossly corrupt. And since the natural tendency of men is to self-satisfaction, the result will be to fasten men in chains of vice. It will be useless to preach the gospel to men whom a power which they are taught to believe has authority above God, has declared to be righteous. And so the so-called Christian nation will be a nation where murder, adultery, and theft will be clothed with the garb of Christianity. Thus the abettors of religious legislation take away the key of knowledge, not entering into the kingdom of God themselves, and hindering those who would. *WWORL 23.4*

To sum up: We oppose religious legislation by civil governments, because it is unjust, and inconsistent with that civil liberty which is inalienable and God-given. Especially is it un-American, directly subversive of that which the founders of this government fought and labored to establish and maintain. Still more do we oppose it, because it is antichristian, tending only to immorality and practical idolatry. It repudiates the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit; it treats the word of God as a common thing, subjecting it to the judgment of men and the caprices of politicians; it even denies God himself, by attributing to fallible mortals the authority which belongs to him alone. *WWORL 24.1*

It is, in fact, of the very essence of heathenism; for while a true theocracy is the best government that could be imagined,—God

himself being ruler,—when men appoint themselves vicegerents of God, they do just what the heathen did. Therefore, we call on all true Americans—upon all lovers of the liberty bequeathed to us by our fathers in the immortal Declaration of Independence; and with a still louder call we appeal to all lovers of God, of the Bible as his inspired word, and of the pure gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, to unite with us in warning the people against this monster of injustice and mystery of iniquity—religious legislation. *WWORL 24.2*

E. J. W.

